

## **FDA News**

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### **FDA Statement on Foodborne *E. coli* O157:H7 Outbreak in Spinach**

**This statement is current as of October 12, 2006**

#### **Positive Test Results**

FDA and the State of California announced today that test results from the field investigation of the outbreak of *E. coli* O157:H7 are positive for *E. coli* O157:H7. Samples of cattle feces on one of the implicated ranches tested positive based on matching genetic fingerprints for the same strain of *E. coli* that sickened 199 people.

The trace back investigation has narrowed to four implicated fields on four ranches. The outbreak strain of *E. coli* O157:H7 from cattle feces was identified on one of these four ranches. At this time, testing of other environmental samples from all four ranches that supplied the implicated lot of contaminated spinach are in progress. The positive test result is a significant finding, but is just one aspect of this investigation. More information may come forward as the investigation continues. These four fields, located in Monterey and San Benito counties, are not currently being used to grow any fresh produce. While the focus of this outbreak has narrowed to these four fields, the history of *E. coli* O157:H7 outbreaks linked to leafy greens indicates an ongoing problem. As FDA stated in its letter to the lettuce industry in November of 2005, FDA continues to be concerned due to the history of outbreaks and the on-going risk for product contamination of leafy greens. <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/prodltr2.html>

For more information on the illnesses, states affected, advice, recalls, symptoms of *E. coli*, lettuce safety initiative, and other background information, visit <http://www.fda.gov/oc/opacom/hottopics/spinach.html>.

This investigation is on-going. FDA, the State of California, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) continue to work closely to determine the cause and scope of the *E. coli* O157:H7 outbreak linked to fresh spinach.

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